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DON'T RETIRE YOUR TASTEBUDS

Some thoughts on food
for active living in the senior years!

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Food for Health and Enjoyment

Eating well can be one of life's greatest pleasures, and one of the nicest things you can do for yourself.

A holiday meal with the family, a potluck dinner with friends or a nutritious evening snack with a good book are satisfying ways to maintain your health and vitality.

The retirement years are more enjoyable if you have the good health and energy to do the things you now have time to do . . . and healthy eating habits can help provide you with that energy and good feeling.

Your nutritional needs do not change drastically upon retirement. You need fewer calories than when you were younger, because body processes slow down with age and you may not be as physically active as you once were. But while your calorie needs have decreased, your need for important nutrients remains the same as always.

The key to healthy eating in the senior years is to eat less food than you used to, but to emphasize nutritious foods more in the choices you make.

Canada's Good Guide – A Good Place to Start

Canada's Food Guide is a handy tool you can use to ensure you are getting the nutritious foods you need. Use it each day to plan your meals and snacks. The Guide outlines four different groups of food, each of which makes its special nutrient contribution to your health and well-being.

Think of a jigsaw puzzle with four pieces – each piece is essential for completing the puzzle. Two copies of one puzzle piece do not make up for a missing part. The same applies to the four food groups. Missing a food group means missing the nutrients supplied by that group.

So it makes good sense to eat a variety of foods from all four food groups each day, to ensure you get the nutrients you need.

CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE FOR SENIORS

Eat a variety of foods from each group every day

Milk and Milk Products

2 servings

Skim, 2%, whole, buttermilk, reconstituted dry or evaporated milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, cheddar and process cheese are included in the MILK and MILK PRODUCTS group

Examples of one serving –

250 mL (1 cup) milk or

250 mL (1 cup) yogurt or

45 g (1½ oz.) cheddar cheese or

45 g (1 slice) process cheese

Bread & Cereals

3-5 servings

Whole grain or enriched bread, cereal, or pasta (rice, macaroni, noodles, spaghetti) are included in the BREAD and CEREALS group

Examples of one serving –

1 slice bread or

125-250 mL (½-1 cup) cooked or ready-to-eat cereal or

1 roll or muffin or

125-200 mL (½-¾ cup) cooked rice, macaroni, noodles, spaghetti

Meat and Alternates

2 servings

Meat, fish, poultry, dried beans, peas or lentils, nuts, seeds, cheese and eggs are included in the MEAT and ALTERNATES group

Examples of one serving –

60-90 g (2-3 oz.) cooked lean meat, liver, fish or poultry or

60 mL (4 tbsp.) peanut butter or

250 mL (1 cup) cooked dried beans, peas, lentils or

80-250 mL ($\frac{1}{3}$ -1 cup) nuts or seeds or

60 g (2 oz.) cheddar, process cheese or

2 eggs

Fruit and Vegetables

4-5 servings

Include at least two vegetables

All fruit and vegetables – cooked, raw and their juices, are included in the FRUIT AND VEGETABLES group

Choose a variety of both vegetables and fruits.

Include yellow or green or green leafy vegetables

Examples of one serving –

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) of any fruit, vegetable or their juices or

1 medium potato, carrot, tomato, peach, apple, orange or banana

Those ‘Extras’ – Fat, Sugar, Alcohol and Sweets

Although fats (such as butter, margarine and oils), sugar, honey, pop, alcohol, candy and rich baked goods may be part of your regular eating pattern, they are not included in

Canada’s Food Guide. These foods may add variety to your meals but they also add a lot of calories, fat, and/or sugar, and very few nutrients. Too many of these foods add unnecessary calories that are stored in your body as unwanted fat. They may dull your appetite for the nutritious foods you require for good health. As with many things in life, moderation is the answer. Enjoy these foods occasionally, but don’t overdo them!

Good Eating is a Pleasure

If you think meal planning and cooking for one or two is a chore, and if tea and toast have become the mainstay of your diet – chances are you're missing out on a lot of nutrients, as well as fun and pleasure.

Try looking at food a little differently. View it as an adventure and a challenge to your creativity. Now may be a good time to try new recipes or enroll in a cooking course. If you've never done much cooking, this may be the hobby you are looking for.

Here are a few ideas to help make eating a rewarding experience:

- Do something different while you eat – read the newspaper or a book, listen to the radio or watch T.V.
- Choose a pleasant spot to eat – by a window, or in good weather outside on the porch or balcony. When was the last time you went for a picnic in the park?
- Make your meals a special part of your day. The more attractive food looks, the better it tastes. Use a colorful placemat, your favorite dishes, a flower or candle. You deserve the best.
- Try to eat a greater variety of foods. If you eat the same foods over and over again, they're bound to get boring. Try something new, whether it's preparing a familiar food in a new way, or tasting something completely different. You'll probably enjoy it.
- Invite one or two friends to join you for dinner. Form a diners' club with a few of your neighbours and meet regularly. It's a social event to look forward to, and an opportunity to try someone else's cooking.
- Eating out can be a real treat. You don't have to pick an expensive place – a simple meal can be just as much fun. Eating out at lunch time is often less expensive and less crowded than at dinnertime.

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- Start your meals with an appetizer – fresh fruit or vegetable juices, crisp raw vegetables, or hot soup.
 - A walk in the fresh air before dinner will perk up your appetite for a good meal.

Planning Your Meals

If you have always planned your family's meals and snacks around Canada's Food Guide, that's a good habit to continue. If you haven't, start now.

If three meals a day have been your usual meal pattern, you may want to continue this habit. Or you could try having part of your day's food as snacks between smaller meals. This may help if you don't feel like eating a lot at any one meal. Just be sure that your snacks, like your meals, count nutritionally.

Now that you have more time for breakfast, be sure to enjoy it. A morning meal will help to get you and your day off to a good start.

You may want to switch the major meal of the day to the noon hour and make the evening meal the light one. This may suit you better if you're more active in the afternoon than in the evening.

Whatever pattern works best for you is the right one, as long as you meet the recommendations set out in Canada's Food Guide by the end of the day.

A sample day's meal plan could look something like this:

Breakfast

oatmeal with milk
apple juice

Morning Snack

bran muffin
(you could eat this with breakfast instead, if desired)

Dinner

individual meat loaf

baked potato

carrots

milk pudding

Afternoon Snack

banana

(or wait and have this for supper)

A Light Supper

vegetable soup

mushroom omelette

tossed salad

fruit nut bread

Evening Snack

cocoa made with milk

(to fill in the gaps from Canada's Food Guide)

How does this menu catch up to Canada's Food Guide recommendations?

2 servings meat and alternatives: meat loaf, omelette

2 servings milk and milk products: milk* pudding, milk* on oatmeal, cocoa

4-5 servings fruits and vegetables: apple juice, potato, carrots, vegetable* soup, mushrooms* in omelette, salad, banana

3-5 servings bread and cereals: oatmeal, muffin, fruit nut bread.



A perfect score!

*The amount of this ingredient in a normal serving of this dish or recipe is equivalent to half of a serving from this food group.

Practice planning your meals with the help of Canada's Food Guide until practice makes perfect.

Shopping Strategy

A shopping trip can mean an outing, fresh air, exercise and an opportunity to economize. So shop for yourself if you can. Here are a few hints to make shopping easier, and to help you get the best values at the supermarket:

Before you leave home:

- Make at least a rough outline of meals for the week and from this plan make your shopping list. Include foods that are in season as they are usually cheaper.
- Check cupboards, refrigerator and freezer for supplies on hand. It's helpful to keep a pad handy to jot down a note when supplies of any food get low.
- Check Wednesday's paper for "specials". Take any coupons with you – but be sure you really need that food.
- Don't forget your glasses when you go shopping. A magnifying glass may be helpful for reading the small print.
- Plan to shop when the store isn't busy (mid-morning or mid-afternoon on weekdays – not weekends!)

At the store:

- Buy less expensive store brands or "no-name" items if they suit your needs.
- It often pays to think small. Buy smaller sizes of packaged and canned foods. The extra cost of smaller packages may be well worth the price if it means you waste less food.

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- Convenience foods can offer you good nutrition with less effort. They help to add variety at mealtime without a lot of fuss or waste. Use them to your advantage. For example, skim milk powder, a frozen meat dish, canned or frozen vegetables and instant rice or potatoes are all easy to prepare and are good for you.
 - Ask the butcher to get you a smaller package or cut of meat, or buy larger packages and divide them up at home.
 - Ask the produce manager to put fresh fruit and vegetables into smaller packages.
 - Check the labels of the items you buy so you know exactly what you're getting:

Grades:

Foods are graded by physical characteristics, not by nutritional content. When more than one grade is available, buy the one best suited to the use you'll make of the product. For example, in dishes where appearance isn't important, use Canada Standard canned fruit and vegetables. They are just as flavorful and nutritious as the higher-priced Canada Fancy and Canada Choice grades.

List of Ingredients:

Labels list the ingredients in descending order by weight. The ingredient listed first is the major one in that product.

Example: two ingredient listings for frozen chicken pie.

No. 1	No. 2
Chicken	Vegetables
Vegetables	Gravy
Gravy	Chicken

No. 2 may be less expensive but contains less chicken, and is mostly vegetables and gravy. Thus, No. 1 may be your better buy.

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- Look for the cost per unit (g, mL, oz., lb., etc.). This is usually on the shelf tag. Larger containers may be a better buy, if you can store leftovers at home without spoilage.
 - Buy canned or frozen fruits and vegetables if they are cheaper. Few nutrients are lost during commercial processing.

Keep in mind the best buys from the four food groups:

MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

skim milk powder, canned evaporated milk, cottage cheese, block cheese, homemade milk pudding, and plain yogurt. (you can add your own fruit).

MEAT AND ALTERNATES

less tender cuts of meat (e.g. pot roast, stewing meat), ground beef, poultry, dried peas, beans and lentils, eggs, peanut butter, fish, liver and other organ meat.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

fresh produce in season, frozen or canned fruit and vegetable juices, potatoes, onions, turnip, carrots, cabbage, apples, bananas. Compare the cost of fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables. Frozen and canned may be cheaper than fresh fruits, especially if they are not in season.

BREAD AND CEREALS

home-cooked and plain cereals (avoid pre-sweetened varieties which are higher in calories and price), long-cooking rice, day-old breads, regular whole wheat or enriched bread, macaroni, noodles (use as “meat stretchers” in casseroles).

And when you're back home:

Store foods properly to reduce food spoilage – this helps prevent food poisoning and wasted dollars.

Cooking For One or Two:

Whether you have always cooked for a larger family or have never cooked at all, cooking for one or two is a new challenge. All you need are a few new habits, and some interesting ideas.

- Following reliable recipes ensures a good-tasting product. Need some ideas or inspiration? A book on cooking for one or two may be a worthwhile purchase. Or borrow one from your local library.
- If you have a freezer, use it to store your bread, rolls and muffins. Take out only as much as you need each day. They keep fresher that way.
- Frozen vegetables are handy. You can take out the exact serving size you need and minimize wastage.
- Cook a meal today for yourself and a friend. Tomorrow your friend can prepare lunch or dinner. Arrange with several friends to get together for a potluck supper. Or, arrange to meet at one of the senior community centres which serve meals in your area.
- Make your favorite recipes for stews and casseroles, divide them into meal-size portions and freeze in plastic containers or re-usable foil plates. Warm them up as you need them. You could make all of your main meals for the week on one day if this method appeals to you.

Plan those leftovers

Store leftovers covered in the refrigerator and use them up quickly for another meal. For example –

vegetables

- add to a salad
- marinate in vegetable oil, vinegar, spices and chill
- add to a casserole
- add to a can of soup
- use in hash or a casserole
- use potatoes as a casserole topping
- use in an omelette

meat and alternates

- top a salad
- combine with potatoes and onions for hash
- use sliced or ground in a sandwich
- add to an omelette or scrambled eggs
- reheat in gravy or seasoned sauce (could use soup or sauce mix)
- use in spaghetti sauce
- use in soup, such as ham in corn chowder

fruit

- use in tossed salads
- combine several for fruit salad
- use with meat, for example: pineapple with ham or apples with roast pork
- use over cereal
- mix with yogurt or cottage cheese

bread

- grilled cheese sandwich
- breading for chicken or fish
- bread pudding
- croutons (bread cubed and oven-dried to golden brown – use in salads or as a garnish for soup)
- crumbed as a casserole topping
- french toast
- stuffing for a pork chop
- use for garlic or herb bread warmed in oven

The Emergency Shelf

Ever wonder why some people never seem to have a problem preparing a meal when unexpected friends drop by at mealtime? Chances are they have foods they need on hand, no matter what the situation.

Anything that intrudes upon your daily routine could be considered an emergency. For example, the friends who take you shopping can't make it this week or, there is a sudden blizzard which prevents anyone from going anywhere! What about the days you just can't be bothered cooking? Will you go hungry?

There is no need to. Convert an empty shelf into an "emergency shelf". Staple and convenience foods are ideal. These foods can be safely stored for about a year, in most cases, but should be rotated frequently and replenished as used.

Items that might be stocked on your emergency shelf include foods from the four food groups:

Milk and milk products	dried skim milk powder, canned evaporated milk, instant cocoa mix (choose one that contains milk), canned puddings, instant milk pudding mix
Meat and alternates	canned meat (e.g. ham, chicken, luncheon meat), canned fish, canned pork and beans, nuts, peanut butter
Fruit and vegetables	canned fruit, vegetables and juices, canned soups, dried fruits, instant or canned potatoes
Bread and cereals	whole grain or enriched cereals and crackers, melba toast, instant rice mixtures, biscuit mix

QUESTIONS SENIORS ASK ABOUT NUTRITION

What About Slimming Down?

That unwelcome bulge is likely due to less activity and the same old eating habits. Carrying more weight than you need is detrimental to your health and it makes getting around more difficult, too. Here are some tips for losing weight:

- There is no quick magic way. Avoid crash diets. They may be dangerous and often have no lasting effects. Sensible eating combined with regular, enjoyable exercise is more successful in the long term.
- Stress more foods like lean, well-trimmed meats, plain fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables, enriched or whole grain cereals and bread, two per cent or skim milk, cottage cheese or yogurt.
- Watch your method of food preparation. Broil, roast or bake. Frying adds fat and calories.
- Cut down on the amount of butter, margarine and sugar you add to foods.
- Use milk in your coffee or tea, instead of cream.
- Keep in mind that balance is the important thing. Don't cut out food groups – just eat smaller portions of the nutritious foods you need every day for good health.

Just as important as what you eat is your daily activity. Avoid “energy conservation” and walk wherever possible, become involved in gardening, bowling or any other hobby that interests you and keeps you active. Join a fitness group for seniors if there is one in your area.

Making these tips part of your way of life will help to keep that scale where it should be.

How Can I Manage “Hard-to-Chew” Foods?

First, keep your teeth or dentures in good condition. Poorly fitting dentures can make eating a problem. It's worth taking the time with your dentist to make sure your dentures fit correctly.

If you still find chewing difficult, try changing the method of preparation instead of the food. For example:

- cook meats by roasting, stewing or boiling and then chop, grind or slice thinly;
- use canned or stewed fruits, or ripe fresh fruit;
- drink fruit or vegetable juices;
- grate cheese or use in a sauce; have cottage cheese or yogurt.

You may find a blender, food processor or grater a great help in preparing your food.

Are Laxatives Necessary?

They shouldn't be. Avoid constipation problems by keeping physically active, and maintaining good food habits. In your daily food selections be sure to include foods high in fibre, such as whole grain cereals and breads, legumes, and raw fruit and vegetables. Drink plenty of water and other fluids.

What are Potassium Rich Foods?

With some medications your doctor will advise you to eat more foods rich in potassium. In addition to bananas and oranges, try grapefruit and tomatoes or their juices, broccoli, brussels sprouts, potatoes, melons, dried fruit, whole grain bread and cereals, dried peas and beans, and unsalted nuts.

What About Vitamin and Mineral Pills?

Eating a variety of foods according to Canada's Food Guide is a good way to get the important nutrients your body requires. Vitamin and mineral preparations are expensive and usually not needed unless advised by your doctor. Check with your doctor before taking any supplements.

Do Special Diets Take the Fun Out of Eating?

They shouldn't. Most therapeutic diets include a wide variety of foods for your enjoyment. If you find your diet too restrictive, perhaps it needs revising and updating. Newer concepts in diet therapy allow for the use of greater choices in foods. Ask your physician to refer you to a hospital dietitian for counselling.

Are Health Foods Better than Regular Foods?

"Health", "organic" or "natural" foods are no better for you than ordinary nutritious foods – they just cost you more! You can meet all your nutrient requirements by choosing your foods carefully at your local grocery store, farmers' market, corner store – or wherever you shop.

A Toast to Your Health and Enjoyment!

Good food can enrich your life. Make every meal contribute to your enjoyment and good health. Sensible eating in the senior years will help you live life to the fullest.

Want to Know More?

For more information on nutrition for you and your family, consult your local health unit or health department.



Ontario

Better health for a better life

Ministry of
Health

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80-7544 3/81 100M
ISBN 0-7743-6170-0